



CARIBBEAN CURRENTS

Volume 5, Number 2
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Welcome..

...to **CARIBBEAN CURRENTS**, Volume Five, Number Two. This newsletter is edited by INFOTERRA/USA in its capacity as the Regional Service Centre (RSC) for INFOTERRA National Focal Points (NFPs) in the English and French-speaking Caribbean. Although the **CURRENTS** is assembled at INFOTERRA/USA, the content belongs to you, the readers. You are encouraged to send in any questions, comments, problems, or interesting issues relevant to the Region for inclusion in the **CURRENTS**. Please see the Guidelines for Contributions on page 4 for more information.

Each issue will feature a Directory of NFPs in the Region so that anyone with international environmental questions can contact their nearest resource. Please feel free to contact one another as well as your RSC for assistance or materials.

Please don't hesitate to share **CARIBBEAN CURRENTS** with your friends and colleagues, and to make copies as needed. The Currents should serve as an informational forum for anyone who lives, works, or is involved in environmental issues in the English and French-speaking Caribbean Region.

ECO-TOURISM

This issue's topic is eco-tourism. As travellers explore the natural attractions of the developing world, they may contribute to "sustainable development," which means development that "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs" (1987 Brundtland Commission). Or, tourism can damage the natural ecology.

The next issue of **CARIBBEAN CURRENTS** will look at children's health. Throughout the world, children face significant threats from an array of environmental hazards. EPA has recently established a new Office of Children's Health Protection, and is calling international attention to the issue by making it a centerpiece at the upcoming meeting of Environment Ministers from G-7 countries.

If you have any comments on this topic, or would like to contribute a short article or have a resources guide to share, please submit your contribution following the guidelines on page 4. Please feel free to fax, write to, or call the RSC with any questions or comments you have. Share information you have and we will include it in the next or a future issue of **CURRENTS**. Thank you for your assistance.

ECO-TOURISM

Benefits, Drawbacks and the Need for a Comprehensive Plan

Eco-tourism or "nature tourism" can be defined as traveling to relatively undisturbed natural areas to study, observe or admire and enjoy the scenery, wildlife and plants indigenous to the area. The activity can range from a simple hike to elaborately arranged, pre-packaged tours available from private companies specializing in this type of tourism. Eco-tourism has rapidly expanded from being a simple hobby for a few interested people, to an activity of increasing popularity. Some countries, such as Kenya, have a long history of attracting tourists to their protected areas, while others are just beginning to explore the area of eco-tourism including its benefits and drawbacks.

Eco-tourism of course has both positive and negative aspects. On the positive side, expanding the eco-tourism market can provide a powerful incentive to protect those areas that might otherwise not be protected. Since eco-tourism can generate lots of revenue, it makes sense to protect and preserve areas and encourage tourists to visit again and again. Eco-tourism can serve as a way to expand the local economy, bringing money and jobs, as well as benefiting local conservation efforts. To conservationists, eco-tourism provides an opportunity to increase funding for protected areas, even in the face of government funding cutbacks. Yet another benefit of eco-tourism is the raising of awareness among people of the importance of conserving and protecting natural areas for themselves, and future generations.

On the negative side, eco-tourism can be an unstable source of revenue. Bad weather, political unrest and the rise and fall of currency values can all cause a decrease in revenue. Because the business of tourism is also seasonal in nature, this could result in unstable job markets and a decrease in revenue at certain times of the year, negatively affecting businesses who rely heavily on eco-tourism dollars. Yet another negative aspect is "too much success." Areas that become too crowded or overpopulated may actually experience an environmental backslide. The very areas that are meant to be protected end up in worse environmental shape than before. It is important to keep an eye on the ecological impact tourism is having on a protected area to determine how much is too much. The native plant and animal life needs to be monitored for adverse effects.

Because of these positive and negative aspects, the importance of a well-developed eco-tourism plan cannot be overlooked. There is not one "perfect" strategy. Each country must develop its own plan and decide what areas to open up to eco-tourism, and those where it should remain restricted. The benefits vs. the costs must be carefully examined. Those who are involved in eco-tourism strategy development need to plan for unexpected occurrences that can have a negative impact on the industry. The involvement of government officials, conservationists, park managers and travel industry representatives will allow for the development of a cohesive strategy which takes into account the opinions and ideas of all these sectors. Ideally, members of each of these groups should form an eco-tourism board, whose mission is to develop and implement the eco-tourism strategy. Examples of countries who have formed such a board include Ecuador (Fundacion Ecuatoriana de Promocion Turistica), Belize (Belize Eco-tourism Association) and St. Kitts and Nevis (St. Kitts and Nevis Department of Tourism).

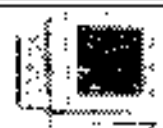
A major function of these boards is the promotion of eco-tourism, and the World Wide Web has presented a new opportunity for reaching millions of perspective travellers. A search of the Internet will reveal numerous sites, including many mounted by tourism boards in Caribbean countries. Homepages currently available include Dominica Online (<http://delphis.netgate.net/home.htm>), Bahamasnet (http://www2.bahamasnet.com/bn/w_ecohome.html), the Costa Rica eco-tourism page (<http://www.erica.com/special/ectour.html>), and the St. Kitts and Nevis eco-tourism page (<http://www.interknowledge.com/stkitts-nevis/kn.eco01.htm>).

The ever-growing number of sites placed on the Internet by tourism boards, and companies specializing in eco-tourism packages provides clear evidence of the growing interest in this form of travel. Careful planning, as well as promotion are necessary to reap the benefits of this industry, while safeguarding the fragile eco-systems that draw the tourists.

*Sources for this article.

Boo, Elizabeth, Ecotourism: The Potentials and Pitfalls (2 volumes), World Wildlife Fund, 1990.

Lindberg, Kreg. Policies for Maximizing Nature Tourism's Ecological and Economic Benefits, World



INTERNET SITES ON ECO-TOURISM

A few of many sources of electronic information on eco-tourism

Ecotourism Information Sources

http://kaos.erin.gov.au/other_servers/category/Ecotourism.html

This site is maintained by the Australian Government, Environmental Resources Information Network (ERIN) and has links to many different sources of ecotourism information on the web. The ERIN homepage also has information on Australia's National Ecotourism Program.

Eco Tourism International (ETI)

<http://catalog.com/kev/eti/>

A U.S. based consortium whose aim is to help government planners and business developers identify, evaluate and implement successful ecotourism projects, and provide assistance in all phases of the process. The site features overviews of the consortium's founders and provides address and e-mail contact information.

Eco-Source

<http://www.podi.com/ecosource>

This site provides links to other eco-related information on the world wide web, information on ecotourism and the marketplace, eco-tourism careers, ecotourism conferences and events, links to other ecotourism information sources, and links to other types of environmental information.

Eco-tourism listserv

Provides a forum for discussion on eco-tourism and industry issues. To subscribe, send a message to majordomo@newaunth.net with a line that says subscribe explorer. More information on this listserv can be found at <http://www.ciesin.cu/OTHER/INFOTERRA/1996/09/msg00009.html>

Greenmoney On-Line Guide, Ecotourism Resources on the Web

<http://www.greenmoney.com/gmg/ecotour.htm>

This site, maintained by the Greenmoney Journal (<http://greenmoney.com/index.htm>) provides links to related Greenmoney Journal Articles, as well as articles and guides from other sources.

Conservation International Ecotourism Page

http://www.conservation.org/web/FIELDACT/C-C_PROG/Ecot.htm

This page is maintained by Conservation International, a non-profit group based in Washington, D.C. and features links to several on-going ecotourism initiatives sponsored by CI to promote ecotourism and provide technical assistance.

Conferences on Eco-Tourism



September 22-23, 1997 -- *International Conference in Context of Central and Eastern Europe, Ecotourism - Balancing Sustainability and Profitability*, Paernu, Estonia. - The Estonian Ecotourism Association (ESTECAS) Contact: Conference Committee, Estonian Ecotourism Association, P.O. Box 84, EE-3600 Paernu Estonia.

December 15-18, 1997 -- *World Ecotour 97 - World Congress & Exhibition on Ecotourism*, Rio De Janeiro, Brazil. This will be the largest world congress and exhibition on tourism and ecotourism to take place in Latin America between 1997 and 1998. Contact: Mr. Rogério Ruschel, e-mail ruschel@arnham.com.br

ISLAND RESOURCES FOUNDATION AND UNEP ANNOUNCE THESE PUBLICATIONS

Guidelines for Sediment Control Practices in the Insular Caribbean (CEP Technical Report #32)
Guidelines for Integrated Planning and Management of Coastal and Marine Areas in the Wider Caribbean Region

The above publications may be ordered from UNEP CAR/RCU, 14-20 Port Royal Street, Kingston, Jamaica. Phone: (1-809) 922-9267 to 9, Telex 3672 UNIPCARJA, Fax: (1-809) 922-9292

ALSO AVAILABLE FROM UNEP:

Environmental Good Practice in Hotels, published by UNEP and the International Hotel and Restaurant Association. For more information or to obtain copies, contact United Nations Environmental Programme, 39-43 Quai André Citroën, 75739 Paris Cedex 15 - France, Telephone 33 (1) 44 37 14 50, FAX: 33 (1) 44 37 14 74, E-mail: unepinfo@unep.fr

Guidelines for Contributions to CARIBBEAN CURRENTS

Any organization or individual operating or involved in the English and French-speaking Caribbean Region is welcome to contribute to the newsletter. Contributions should be addressed to:

Caribbean Currents Coordinator
 INFOTERRA/USA
 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
 Headquarters Library, 3414
 401 M Street, S.W.
 Washington, D.C. 20460
 UNITED STATES
 Telephone: (202) 260-5917, Fax: (202) 260-1923; E-mail: library-infoterra@epamail.epa.gov

Please note that submissions should meet the following criteria:

- They should be relevant to environmental issues
- They must be of interest to or directly involve the Region
- They must not endorse or recommend any product or commercial service, explicitly or implicitly
- They must be brief--under 250 words; Bulletin Board requests should be under 100 words
- They must be received by the posted deadline (see below)

Please feel free to contact the *Caribbean Currents* coordinator if you are interested in submitting a longer article. You should contact the coordinator to discuss your topic and any size or content restrictions beforehand. Be aware that once your article is submitted, it is subject to editing as needed. Final decisions on editing and inclusion of any contributions are left to the INFOTERRA/USA Manager. Please contact INFOTERRA/USA using the address above to contribute any comments, questions, problems, or ideas.

DEADLINE FOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO Vol 5, No. 3: June 10, 1997

Welcome to The *CARIBBEAN CURRENTS* Bulletin Board

Each issue, we will publish questions or concerns of interest to CURRENTS readers. Anyone who has materials or information that they are seeking or that they feel will be helpful should feel free to contribute. We will post queries and offerings of general interest on the Bulletin Board. You may respond by contacting the reader who has placed the item, or the RSC.

Bulletin Board



DOCUMENTS AVAILABLE

INFOTERRA/USA has free copies of the following publications available.

If you would like copies of any of these documents, please let us know

- EPA National Publications Catalog, October 1996
- Technical Support Document: International Training Workshop, Principles of Environmental Enforcement: Tourism (EPA300/R-95/110)
- U.S./Mexico Border XXI Program: Summary of Domestic Meetings, June 1996

To request copies of these documents, just write to INFOTERRA/USA using the contact information on page 6



Information Needed on Children's Health

The next issue of *Caribbean Currents* will focus on the issue of children's health and protecting them from environmental threats. We would be interested in receiving any information on projects or studies on this topic currently taking place in the region. Any regulatory or educational guides you can provide would also be greatly appreciated. These materials will also be kept on file for the benefit of researchers and visitors to INFOTERRA.

Please contact INFOTERRA/USA using the information on page 6 if you can provide any assistance. Thank you for your support!

Send your Bulletins to the RSC for publication in the next issue. See the Guidelines on page 4 for information on submitting items.

About the NFP Directory

This directory reflects changes and additions to the INFOTERRA Directory of National Focal Points distributed by INFOTERRA/PAC, dated January 1997. Please check this information to verify that it is correct and up-to-date. If you have any changes or corrections, please notify the RSC as soon as possible. We will be happy to relay the information to the PAC.

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